

A
S E R M O N

OF THE

Credibility of the Mysteries

OF THE

CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

Preached before a

LEARNED AUDIENCE.

By *THO. SMITH*, Fellow of *St. Mary*
Magdalen College in Oxon.

L O N D O N,

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C. Smith R.P.D.
Episc. Lond. &
Sacris Domest.

Nobilissimo Viro,
D. ROBERTO BOYLE.

Verae ac Solidae Pietatis,
Summae eruditionis,
Instaurandae sanioris Philosophiae, ^{philosophiae}
Optimè de literis tam Sacris quam ^{sanior philosophiae}
Humanioribus merendi ^{medicina}
Famâ longè celeberrimo,
Magno ævi Exemplo & Ornamento :

T. S.

Hanc Concionem (unâ cum Appendice)
coram Academicis Oxoniensibus,
solenni S. Marci Evangelistæ Festo,
In sacello Collegii B. Mariæ Magdalenæ

Superiori anno habitam,
In debitæ observantiæ Μνημόσυρον,
Lubens merito dedicat consecratque.

Annus.
Annus superior
1742 last year

ERRATA.

P.7. l.10. — ~~ten~~. p.15. l.12. ~~belief~~. p.17. l.7. ~~the ordin~~: l.23. ~~ingenious~~. p.21.
l.24. for ~~is~~: read ~~bis~~. p.26. l.12. ~~revealed~~. p.28. l.15. ~~when~~. p.34. l.14. ~~belongs~~. p.42.
l.5. for ~~I~~, read ~~we~~. p.45. l.12. ~~the only~~. p.48. l.24. — ~~vir~~.
The ~~appendix~~ refers to Page 47.



A

S E R M O N

Preached before a

Learned Audience.

1 TIM. III. the former part of the 16. verse.

1 Tim. 3. 16.
mystery godly

Without Controversie great is the Mystery of
Godliness.



OW much the Doctrine of
Christianity tends to the im-
provement of Reason and
Learning, how it has brought
into the World a better and
more certain knowledg of God and of our
selves, how it has advanced the common no-
tices of nature, and has chased away with the
clear evidences of its truth those thick shades

B

of

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of error, that had darkned the understanding, and has removed all those prejudices, that were taken up from sense and a very partial and deceitful observation of things, may be fully demonstrated by comparing the former estate of Mankind, before the coming of *Christ* in the flesh, with the present, wherever it is received in its truth and power. Men before were led by opinion and conjecture and fancy only, as to matters of Religion and the concerns of another World : They had fears upon them indeed of a divine justice, that would revenge the violation of the law of nature either here or hereafter ; and a reflection upon the strange traverses and difficulties of life had taught them to expect another life after this : but their eyes were dim however, and they could not see far into futurity ; they could have no clear deductions of particular truths for want of a right knowledg of true and certain principles : hence it was, that they were so inconstant and wavering, and knew not well where or what to fix on. But *Christ* by his appearance and manifesting the will of God to us, bath brought life and immorta-

lity to light through the Gospel, and children and persons of an ordinary reach and capacity may now easily apprehend those things, that is, in reference to *God* and his attributes, the misery we are in by sin, the means of our recovery from this woful estate of life, the immortality of the Soul, and the like; which before those great *Philosophers*, notwithstanding all their vaunts and quests after learning, notwithstanding they set up Schools and were ambitious to give names to Sects, had but a very imperfect knowledg of.

But while these truths were received by those, that were willing to be taught, and to submit themselves to the dictates of reason, and convictions of miracles, which were added to give all possible satisfaction to the understanding, others, who were resolv'd before hand not to be convinced, who had rather remain in their ignorance and idolatry and their sins, then be converted to a new Religion, and reduced to such strictness of life, as that requires, from their debaucheries and brutish pleasures, who had rather fall down before a Statue or a Picture, because their Fathers had

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done so before them, and because it was the established Religion of their Country, than acknowledg and adore a *Crucified Saviour*, reject it upon the account of the *Mysteries of Faith*, without ever examining the weight of the arguments, that would have enforced them upon their belief : They could not in the mean while but acknowledg the happy and glorious change, that *Christianity* had wrought in the World, how much it exceeds and goes beyond all the morality of the wisest and best Lawgivers and Founders of Republicks, how it not only laies down rules for the right ordering of life, but furnishes its votaries with a power to practise them ; not only shews us a way to walk in, but takes us by the hand and leads us in it : but the difficulties, it seems, that are to be met with in conceiving some of its mysteries, offended them. This was their pretence and their plea for their infidelity ; they would have demonstration for every thing, they would be taught and convinced by Syllogism, their Pride and their Self-conceit and the opinion they had of their own learning would not permit them to believe.

They

They made their understanding the measure of all truth, and what did not suit with those narrow and low principles they had taken up, was scornfully rejected by them. *The Jews*, saies the *Apostle*, 1 Cor. i. 22, 23. *require a Sign, and the Greeks seek after Wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness.* But how irrational was the demand of both? for what greater sign could there be to the *Jews*, than the fulfilling of all the *Prophecies* in the person of *Christ*, even to the minute circumstances of his life and death, and those mighty miracles that shewed forth themselves in him? what greater wisdom could the *Philosophers* pretend to or desire, than the wisdom of *God in a mystery*, as it is called, 1 Cor. ii. 7. than those clear discoveries of the divine nature and the essential perfections of the *Godhead*, than the admirable contrivances of the redemption of mankind by the sufferings and death of *Christ*, the Son of God, than the ways and means of recovering the dignity of our nature, and of living here like men, and of living hereafter like Angels? Such a wisdom, as will not only gratifie our earnest desires and pursuits

pursuits after knowledg, but will make us happy too for ever. Their weak and blear eyes could not endure such a great light that

brake in upon them, and therefore they were desirous to retire into the shade. They could not fully conceive and comprehend them, they seemed therefore foolish and impossible notions, that were owing wholly to an ungovern'd imagination. And hereupon ^(c) they proceed to calumniate the *Christians* as a company of well-meaning and honest and good-natur'd, but very simple and over-credulous people, who took all things upon trust, without enquiring into their truth, and certainty; for such were the slanderous accusations of ^(b) *Celsus*,

^(c) *Lucian*,

(a) Thus *Enslin* sums them up in general, it being the common argument of the *Heathen Philosophers* against the *Christian religion* -- *ἡ χριστιανισμὸν πρὸς εὐδαιμόνιον ἀποσώζειν, ἀλόγων ὅτις καὶ ἀνεξέλαστον συγκελεύσιν τοῦ ὁμοσημοῦ ἐπιμελῆος πρὸς τὸ εὖ καὶ σωφρονιστὴν μὴδὲν φάσκοντες διδάσκειν ἀποδείξεως ἕνεκα πρὸς τὸν τεκμήριον ὅτι ἐν τοῖς ἐκπαρθευμένοις ἀληθείαις, τίς ὅτι μὴ ὁμοσεύειν ἀξίον τοῦ ὁμοσημοῦ, παρ' ὅ καὶ πρὸς χρηματίζον, ὅτι ἀνεῖται χάριν καὶ ἀβυσσὸς πίστεως.* p.4. Pariliis, A.C. 1628.

(b) The words of *Celsus*, as we find them, in *Origens* first book against that *Epicurean Philosopher*, are these — *τίνας μὴ βουλομένους διδόναι ἢ λαμβάνειν λόγον πρὸς τὸν πνεῦμα, χρῆμας τὸ, μὴ εἰς ταῦτα, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὸν καὶ ἡ πίστις σὺ σώσει σὺ, καὶ φησὶν αὐτοῦ λόγον, κακὸν ὅτι ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ σωτὴς, ἀγαθὸν δ' ἡ μωρία.* p.2. edit. C. mab. In this latter part he alludes to *S. Pauls* words, 1 Cor. 3. 18. which he most horribly and maliciously perverts, as *Origen* shews p. 12. He had before, out of his great *Philosophical* wariness, advised his readers not to take up opinions upon trust, without following reason and a rational guide, which he imputes to the *Christians*, and reckons them among the *τὸν ἀλόγου πνεύματος μωροῦς καὶ πρὸς τὸν πνεῦμα, &c.* such as rashly believe jugglers and pretenders to *Legendary* tricks, whose credulity and simplicity they abuse to evil designs and intents. So in the third book, he most falsely accuses the whole body of *Christians*,

c) *Lucian*, and ^(d) *Hierocles*, and the rest of the learned enemies of the *Christian Religion*: They upbraided the *Christians* of their times, with whom they conversed, in their writings and in their discourses, that they received all *αλόγῳ πίστει* καὶ ἀνεξείλασθαι συγκατάδοι, with an irrational Faith and an hasty assent, past without any examination, that they could bring no proof or demonstrative argument of what they held so pertinaciously, that nothing was required to make a *Christian* a *Believer*, as they used to speak by way of Scorn, but ἀκριτῶς καὶ ἀβασίανως πείσιν, an unjudicious and groundless Faith; yes certainly, a good life and a sanctified understanding, and an humble opinion of a mans self. But these are but words, and men are not to be laughed and rallied out of their faith and a well-grounded perswasion; there is nothing of argument in scorn and passion; they only shew the weakness of the cause, and

the

ὡς πάντα μὴ σφὸν ἀπλανήσαντες τὸ λῆ-
γει τὴν πίστιν, αὐτῶν, μόνον ἀνθρώπους καὶ τὸς
ἀνδρες ποδοδὲς καλέσαντες, driving away
every wise man from the doctrine of faith,
and only admitting persons void of under-
standing, and of a hasty and servile temper.
p. 121.

(c) De morte Peregrini, speaking of the
Christians, whom he makes a company of
idiots, easily cheated — ἀλλὰ πρὸς ἀ-
κριβὲς πίστιν, τὸ ποιεῖν παραδείξασθαι.

(d) In *Eusebius*, in the confutation of
his impious book (which he intitled
φιλαλήθης) wherein he compared *Apo-*
lonius of *Tyana* to our most blessed *Sav-*
our, where he objects to the *Christians*
--*κρυπτοῦ καὶ εὐχερέσαν*-- lightness and ea-
siness of nature, p. 512. and calls them
--*μωροὺς καὶ βεβηλωμένους*-- fools and
rusticks. p. 514. edit. *Parisi*: in fine libro-
rum de demonstratione Evangelica.

Scorn
there is no argum^t in being
passionate.

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want of reason in those, who make use of them.

But now after so many myriads of Converts to the *Christian Faith*, after the attestation and consent of so many ages, who have examined severely the principles, on which it is founded, who would expect that any one should dare now to question the truth of it again, that men who have been baptized into it, should abjure and renounce it, should no longer acknowledg *Christ* their *Saviour*, should deny him to be *God*, or that he had any commission from Heaven to institute a new Religion, should act over the part of the *Jews*, and arraign the *Son of God* as an impostor, and side with the *Heathen Philosophers* against *Christianity*, as a doctrine not to be endured and embraced, and make use of their very arguments for the defence of their infidelity? But we know

whence the malice and the infidelity of these *Theists* proceed; they have abandoned themselves to a wicked life, they are immersed in sensual pleasures, which they make the only end of life. They are convinced, that *Christianity*, which is a Doctrine according to Godli-

ness

Theists.

Theists are those who deny *Christ* to be a *Saviour* or *God*, and who have abandoned themselves to a wicked life, and are immersed in sensual pleasures. Their infidelity proceeds from their abandoning *Christ* to a wicked life, a life of sensual pleasures.

ness is not consistent with such practices, which yet even nature and right reason utterly condemn.

The *Mysteries of Faith* do not so much trouble these men, as the severity of its commands. These they cannot away with, their lusts help them to arguments against the other, and they content themselves with little pieces of Sophistry, and think to vindicate the ill course of life, they have taken up, this way. Natural conscience and an ordinary reflexion upon the works of nature will not permit them, it may be, to deny a *God*, though they live, as though there were none; They will acknowledge him, it may be too in a good humour, the Creatour of the World, but not the Judg and Governour of it; they look upon themselves, as only born to gratifie their sensual appetite; They declare equally, for a liberty of living and thinking as they please. They will have no restraint laid upon their understanding, or their lives. *Christianity* is too strict, and therefore too difficult for them; They may have the wit perchance, but not the morality of the *Philosophers*, whose very lives not-

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withstanding will condemn them as much as the *Christian doctrine*. Their evil education and custome and prepossession, those great hinderances of truth, made their refusing *Christianity* the less inexcusable upon the account of its mysteries, while they acknowledged the rules and institutions of it to be according to the highest reason, and the exaltation of the humane nature, while these men pretend its mysteries to be therefore incredible, because the rules of it, which thwart their lusts so much, are so severe. Little or no good I know is to be done upon these men by perswasion or argument, of which they are scarce capable, who turn all things into Burlesque and ridicule : They it seems are too witty (for so they call their boldness and want of judgment) either to understand or embrace the principles of Christianity ; but their ill lives shew, that were they as clear as the principles of *Geometry*, so long as a strict and holy life is as necessary and essential to the being of a Christian, as a right and sound faith, they would except and cavil at them, and at last reject them ; and if the Gospel be bid, be esteemed after

The Truth:

that their education of truth
are evil education,
by a prepossession.

Holiness.

A holy life is necessary to
a man as a sound faith.

S

of the Christian Religion.

I I

after so many clear and undoubted revelations, after such evident proofs and convictions, an obscure and incredible doctrine, *it is bid to them that are lost*, or rather, ἐν τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις, *in them that are lost*; it is only so to such desperate and obstinate wretches, whom reason it self cannot satisfy, *in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.* 2 Co. iv. 3, 4.

But these are wild and extravagant persons, of debauched understandings and lives, and only to be confuted by the severity of laws; and of the two the *Christian* religion has suffered more by the secret underminings of *Hereticks*, than by their bold attacks. These are the more dangerous enemies, who deny the truths and mysteries of it, upon a pretence of wariness and caution, and go *soberly about to destroy it*. But all their objections, how plausible soever, must at last resolve into obstinacy and pride: They fancy things must be, and are, as they would have them, or else

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they cannot be at all: They vainly suppose themselves able to search into the depths of all divine and humane knowledg, and being once prepossessed with this conceit, they grow peevish and angry because the *Christian Religion* proposes things to their belief, which they cannot grasp, and are too big for their understanding; and rather than forego this beloved *Principle*, they will destroy the *Fundamentals of Christianity*, and to apply that of

* In *Apologetico* cap. 5. where he mentions an old decree of the *Roman Senate*, *Ne qui Deus ab Imperatore consecraretur, nisi à Senatu probatus*; and hereupon he tells us, that the Emperor *Tiberius* moved by the report of those [mighty] works, which declared the truth of our *Saviours Divinity*, he received out of *Pallastine*, and sent it to the *Senate* with *prærogativa suffragii sui*; though the *Senate* were not disposed to admit him into the number.

* *Tertullian* to them, *nisi homini Deus placuerit, Deus non erit, homo jam Deo propitius esse debet*: *Christ* shall not be *God*, nor satisfy the divine justice for the sins of man-

kind, because this seems incongruous to them; it is a difficulty, that doth puzzle their understanding; it is above the strength of their fancy; their reason, they say, tells them, this cannot be; allowing of no such thing as *faith*, which is the great duty of the *Gospel*, and forgetting, that *Christianity* is, as it is undoubtedly, *the great mystery of Godliness*.

Thus under a pretence of clearing the truth of

of Religion, and making it the more easily intelligible, to *Turks and Jews*, they resist it in the true notion of it, and corrupt and destroy it; to whom fully agrees that character, which *St. Paul* gave of the followers of *Simon Magus*, *2 Tim.* iii. 8. Κατεφθαρμένοι ἔνθ'ν, ἀδόκιμοι περὶ ἑπίσιν, *men of corrupt minds, and reprobate concerning the faith*; such whose understandings are wholly vitiated and perverted, notwithstanding the great and fierce claims they laid to knowledg, as if they were the only men, that understood the will and mind of *God*; such who reject the establish'd truths of the *Gospel*, who have no regard to *the heavenly doctrine of the Evangelists and Apostles*, the truth of which they sealed and confirmed with their blood; but do μεθοδεύειν τὰ λόγια τῶ Κυρίου πρὸς ἰδίας ἡθουμίας, to use the words of *St. * Polycarp* in his Epistle to the *Philippians*, that is, *by their fraudulent devices model the oracles of God according to their own fancies and lusts*; who set up a new Religion, which the *Catholic Church of Christ* never knew or was

* Ὅτι ἀν' μεθοδεύειν τὰ λόγια τῶ Θεοῦ περὶ τῆς ἰδίας ἡθουμίας, καὶ λέγει μὴτε ἀνέσσειν μὴτε κτείνειν ἡ, ἔτι καὶ περὶ τοῦ ὅτι τῶ Σαλατιῶ: ex editione Reverendissimi Usserii Armachani, p. 20. This perchance more particularly respects *Marcion* the heretick; for by that name he called him to his face: as we read in *Irenaeus* 3. lib. adv. haereses, c. ap. 3.

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acquainted with, and endeavour to destroy the *faith of Christianity*, and think in the mean while they have reason on their side for so doing: and how far by their arts and subtilties and plausible insinuations, by this their *slight and cunning craftiness*, whereby they lie in wait to deceive (for it is nothing else, however blancht over and disguised with shews of sober reason) they have prevail'd upon this Age, is too sad to consider; so that now it chiefly concerns us to secure the ground-work, *the principles of the doctrine of Christ*, and to oppose this growing evil, to watch and stand fast in the faith, and quit our selves like men, and not to be like children, carried away with every blast and wind of doctrine, and especially of the vain doctrine of Socinus, as it will appear, when the varnish and false colours are washt of, but to be *established in the truth of the holy Gospel*, as the Church hath taught us to pray in the Collect of this anniversary of St. Mark.

To evince therefore the unreasonableness of their pretensions, I shall endeavour in the following discourse to make out these two particulars.

1. That the great mysteries of Religion can-

not

*The great mysteries of
Xmty are no subjects
to of truth of it.*

not, and ought not to be any way prejudicial to the truth of it.

2. That the Christian Religion requires ^{2x unity requires us} us to believe these mysteries, upon such ^{to believe the mysteries} grounds, as we cannot reject, without doing violence to our faculties, and consequently, that the rejecting and disbelieving them must be unreasonable. ^{upon good grounds.}

1. The great mysteries of Religion can- ^{The great mystery of} not and ought not to be any way prejudi- ^{religion ought not to} cial to its truth. ^{be any prejudice to} ^{truth of it.}

They who find fault with Christianity for ^{the} proposing such great mysteries to our beliefs, ^{the} and would have all things so plain and obvious, ^{the} that they should command and force assent, ^{the} should first trie their reason in solving the difficulties of nature; and if notwithstanding all their labour and toil, after the most accurate researches into the nature of sensible beings, of things that we daily see and handle, of things that seem to lie level with our understanding, and are no way disproportionable to it, they cannot pretend to a perfect knowledg of them, if the ordinary operations of nature be so abstruse, and unintelligible, and these depths are

not

mysteries.

Nature.

There are mysteries
- all natural things.

The Credibility of the Mysteries

not to be fathomed, if her secrets are beyond the discovery of the most piercing judgment and reason ; *Religion* with greater reason must be allowed to have its mysteries ; there being such a vast disproportion between things relating to *God* and his nature, and the things of the world. The contemplation of nature is curious and useful ; it is a part of the service and worship we owe to God the Creatour, to admire his wisdom and power in the beautiful frame and order of things, which is best done by enquiring into their natures and properties, into their powers and operations and qualities, by examining the curious contexture and the fitness and usefulness of their parts, and there is nothing in the whole universe, but deserves to be considered, and very much conduces to this end.

This is the business of *Philosophy*, and what contemplative minds labour in the search of, to discover and make out how things were at first made, and are still continued in their being, and to find out their peculiar virtues, whereby they produce such a variety of effects, and how they may be altered or improved for the

Nature

The contemplation
of nature is curious
to use full.

17
X
2

the farther use and benefit of mankind. Nothing of which can be effected, at least but very imperfectly, and in a way scarce tolerable, by acquiescing in general observations, derived from weak and slight notices, without descending to severe trials and experiments, or by relying upon the principles of *ordinary Philosophy*, that are confessedly unintelligible, and which instead of explaining nature, do but perplex and confound the understanding, and which have nothing to maintain and keep up their credit, but the authority of a name and the immoderate love of antiquity. But whatever *hypothesis* we fix upon, they who have the deepest insight into nature will be forced to confess, they see but a little way, and all that they can pretend to is but conjecture and probability, that when they may seem to arrive at some satisfaction in the order and connexion of things, it is very possible and likely, that things may be made and exert their causalities otherwise, than they suppose, be their fancy never so ingenious, and their reason never so profound and strong (for who will be so presumptuous, as to limit either the wisdom or

D

power

Natura l'ists

*The greatly - naturally
relied on by the
people*

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*Things
satisfaction
here are words of the
you can't any, let
every account be
of*

power of God, that he can do no more, or must do what they fancy?) that there are thousands of things, that they cannot give any satisfactory account of, and that the more they seek to comprehend the reason of things, the more they are at a loss, the more they are dissatisfied, and the effect of their study is nothing but disorder and trouble of mind.

*Reason.
our reason for
a matter of some
much more
of a higher nature.*

Now if we are convinced of the weakness and insufficiency of our reason in our ordinary speculations, if it fails us, when we attempt to give an account of our selves, and the operation of our minds, and when we have to do with plain matters of sense, how unfit and unable must it be to comprehend and make out things, that stand at that infinite distance from it, to which it bears no proportion? They may as well pretend that all these great difficulties and perplexities, we meet with in the conceptions of things, should be taken away, that all men ought to be born compleat Philosophers, and be inspir'd with the perfect knowledge of things, which they cannot attain to after several years, spent in labour and study, that nothing should exist, but what we can conceive,

ceive, and that the truth and possibility of things should not derive from the will and pleasure of God, and from that *Idea* he has in his divine understanding, but only take their measures, and be judged by those narrow conceptions, we borrow from sense. Men are not to be disputed out of the belief of their senses, that there is no such thing as motion, or continuity of parts in extended matter, because of the great difficulties, that attend the conception of them, and things are daily produced and by degrees arrive at the perfection of their being, and perform actions suitable to their respective natures, though *Philosophers* disagree in their opinions, and are dissatisfied one with another, and cannot tell how or in what manner they do all this.

motion

*There is motion, continu-
ity of parts, the great
difficulties attend the
conceptions of them*

2. Thus *Nature* has its *Mysteries*; and who will undertake to explain Secondly, the *Mysteries of Providence*, and account for all those extraordinary events, which have hapned in all ages of the world; O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and power of God! how unsearchable are his Judgments, and his wayes past finding out! Rom. xi. 33. It is presumption to enquire too

Providence

*There are mysteries
in providence*

Judgments

*God's judgments are
unsearchable by men.
as to the design, not even
of men*

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busily into the ends and reasons of God's proceedings with men, as well as impiety to find fault with them. This should satisfy us, that God, who is of infinite perfection, neither does nor can do any thing, that is unjust; that he governs the World by an infinite wisdom, that he permits men to act according to the liberty of their will; and that they stand accountable to him for the actions of their lives; and that they are but his instruments to bring about his eternal purposes and decrees; and that nothing comes to pass without his ordering or foresight; and that all those cross dispensations are for wise ends, best known to himself. Why things are thus, for instance, why the Jews were selected by him to be his peculiar people; why the coming of the Messias in the flesh was deferred so long; why so many Heathen Nations lie yet unconverted, and the like, must be referred wholly to his divine will and pleasure, which is guided by rules of eternal rectitude and wisdom. Let it abundantly content us in all changes and chances of this mortal life, in all those distinguishing acts of Providence, that are every where visible between Nation and

Ques.
why is it that only we are
for god, people & none else
Messiah
why did he come
so long ago
why the
many heathen nations
are still in darkness
and unconverted
are unaccountable to us

and Nation, or between man and man in respect of the outward conditions and states of being, that *God* will have it so. *God is wonderful in his doings with the children of men.* These things call for our admiration: They are secrets not to be enquired into; which way soever we look, whether up to heaven, or down upon the earth and sea, and observe what is done in each, or whether we turn our eyes inward, we shall find our selves surrounded with wonders, too great for our knowledg, and enough to baffle and confound our curiosity, and to convince us, that there is as well an infinite distance between *God* and us, in respect of wisdom, as of power. Now would these men have the state of things altered and changed, and the world new modelled, and new laws given to mankind, and a new nature too, and all things reduced to an easier order, and regulated by their fancies, that so nothing may be above their capacity and understanding? What is this, but the effect of a foolish pride, that is discontented and troubled, that so many things are out of ^{its} ~~his~~ reach and power, and that will scarce be brought to acknowledg, that *God* can.

God

God is wonderful in his doings. Psl 40. 5.

These are wonders.

wonders - how, what, & sea, our selves.

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can do, more than they fancy or comprehend?

3. Besides, those who object against the instituted religion of our Saviour, the greatness of its

mysteries, may use the same arguments against the principles of natural religion. That there is

an infinite being, in whose Idea is essentially included all possible perfection, is the voice and

dictate of nature, right reason, and conscience, and evidenced by the constant and uninter-

rupted order and course and frame of the universe, and by the universal consent of mankind,

who have rites and ceremonies of religion, their Priests and their Sacrifices, to whom they offer

up prayers and oblations, to whom they appeal for justice when injured, and to whom

they flee for refuge and succour, when they are distressed and in danger, as it were by in-

stinct, and without any deliberation. But notwithstanding this evidence and clearness

and demonstration of the existence of a God, they will not pretend to understand fully the

nature of the Godhead. That God is infinite in essence and power, and that all things owe

their being to his will, they must be forced to confess, or else deny his being, and fancy an

infinite

Religion
there are
mysteries in
natural
religion.

An infinite being
of all possible per-
fection is the
voice of Nature, right
reason, and conscience, it is
attested by the constant and
frame of the universe and
universal consent of
mankind.

Godhead
the nature of
Godhead can't be
fully understood
nor his will.

infinite series of causes, infinite periods of motions, and an infinite succession of generations, which is absurd and contradictory and impossible, though they have only a negative notion of infinity. Our understandings cannot reach so far, as to have a compleat and comprehensive notion of it : and when we cannot give satisfactory accounts concerning the affections of a natural body, as motion, place, time ; much less can it be expected, that we should do this concerning eternity, immensity, or the other necessary and essential attributes of God : so that the difficulty of conceiving a thing does not any way hinder the truth and possibility of its existence. However the most scrupulous and inquisitive may be satisfied, that there are such attributes, and that consequently upon a reflection, not only on the nature of God, but on the scant measures of knowledge in creatures, it is necessary, they should be above our reach and comprehension. As we may discover much in a curious piece of art, or wonder of nature, as the Load-stone, or any Electrical body : we may find out some virtue in a plant, or mineral, or peculiar sort of

conception.
The difficulty of conceiving a thing does not hinder the truth and possibility of its existence

The Credibility of the Mysteries

of earth ; and yet oftentimes after a laborious search, the best *Naturalists* are forced to confess, that there is or may be at least a great deal more, than what they have discovered.

understanding. But here, they say, that the understanding *neither does nor can admit of any thing incredible ; and we say so too.* *God doth not,* and consequently the *Christian Religion*, which is the *doctrine and revelation of God*, does not propose any thing to us, as the object of our faith, that is really impossible in it self, and involves in it a perfect and manifest contradiction ; and nothing less can or ought to be judged incredible. But *when they pretend,* that no proposition ought or can be believed

A proposition might be believed tho it cannot be cleared by reason nor by evidence & is therefore selfevident

further, than it may be cleared up to the understanding by the evidence of natural reason, or of the things themselves contained in it, we reject it as an unjust and unreasonable demand, which will fully appear by shewing the falseness of both parts of the supposition.

credible things may be credible tho they cannot be proved by reason

1. *It is utterly false, that nothing is credible, but what can be proved and made out by reason.*

of the Christian Religion.

reason. There are indeed several degrees of
credibility, according to which the mind does
admit some things with a greater ease and free-
ness than others. But however be the matter
proposed never so unlikely or unusual, if the
authority be just and good, it must not there-
fore be pronounced incredible, because per-
chance it is not fully agreeable to the present
state of affairs and practice of the World, or
because I have some little prejudice against it.
For as in a matter of fact, where there are suf-
ficient proofs given of a Relators both honesty
and knowledg, when I have all the assurance
in the World, that such a matter is capable of,
and that he could not mistake in understanding
it, and that his words and thoughts do not in
the least disagree, when I can object nothing
but a groundless surmise, that possibly, and for
ought I know, it may be otherwise, this will
challenge my assent, and be a sufficient warrant
to me to believe it, whether I have a clear *Idea*
of it or no : for this unlikeliness and seeming
repugnancy of it, may arise from my being ig-
norant of several circumstances, the knowledg
of which would render it probable and easie :

E

fo

25
credibility
several degrees of
credibility

Relator
A relator's knowledge
& honesty will of y^e self
challenge y^e assent

The Credibility of the Mysteries

so is it in matter of Doctrine; whatsoever is proposed by God, becomes thereby immediately credible, and my assent is rational and just, though the thing be above my apprehension; and this I must ascribe to the greatness of the object, and the imperfections of my reason, which neither is nor can pretend to be an arbiter and judge in such matters, which are too high for it: so that before a man can safely pronounce a doctrine, that is revealed, incredible, and reject it as such, he must question the power and veracity of God, and maintain, that nothing is possible, but what we can comprehend; and thus under a pretence of caution, betray the greatest immodesty in the world, when he himself believes several other things, upon the bare testimony of men, which neither his wit nor curiosity, nor his reason can ever be able satisfactorily to make out and demonstrate.

Incredible
The greatest of God's gifts is his perfection. If we are perfect in the things we see, we are not perfect in the things we do not see.

Proposition

2. It is equally false, that no Proposition ought to be believed, but what may be cleared up to the understanding by the evidence of the things themselves. The falseness of which assertion I shall fully evince in these three particulars; by shewing

1. That

of the Christian Religion.

27

1. That it destroyes the nature of Faith. *The contrary destroyes the nature of faith*

2. It takes away the blessedness and rewardableness annexed to it. *It destroys the blessedness annexed to it.*

3. It reflects on the Wisdom and Sovereignty of God, who may, if it pleases him, propose such things to us, and command us to believe them. *It reflects on god's wisdom & sovereignty*

1. It destroyes the nature of Faith. *It destroys the nature of faith*
To believe in general, in the proper notion of it, is to assent to things upon the discovery and attestation of others, which are not evident and apparent of themselves ; that is, when I have no demonstrative or sensible knowledg of things, I admit and judge them to be true, not because I either saw them, and can assure my self of them by any of my other senses, or because they are so evident to my reason, that I must needs embrace them, as a principle or conclusion in Philosophy, but because I have received them from another, who informs me and gives me this account of them, for whose sake I assent to them as real and certain. *The nature of faith stands in assent to things upon the discovery of things which are not apparent to myself.*
By which it is distinguished from science, which is grounded upon the evidence and clearness of *Science*

the apprehension of the respective propositions or objects, when things are so plain that they do necessitate our assent, as that the opposite members of a true and perfect contradiction cannot belong to the same thing at the same time, that equals added to equals make equals, that in a triangle, three angles are always equal to two right angles, and the like. And the like assurance and certainty of knowledg is gained, when we draw conclusions according to rule and the laws of method from first principles, which are assented to, as soon as they are proposed, and the terms understood; when~~se~~ there is an immediate dependance and connexion of things, and one thing naturally follows another; Then we are said to know a thing, when we can run it up to its first principles, can trace its original and cause, and understand its effects and operations.

This distinction being so just and natural, to call for evidence and demonstration in things proposed to be believed, is to confound different assents of the mind, to turn *Religion* into

into Science, to destroy the truth of History, and Tradition, and Revelation, and to fall into *Scepticism*, and doubt whether any thing be certain, but what we see and can prove and represent by a Scheme, and at last question whether our Sense, and what we call our Reason do not deceive us, or else, which is the effect of a greater phrensie, run our selves into this gross absurdity, that we are as wise as *God*, and that he can do no more, than what our gross fancies will have him.

That then some of the grand articles of Religion are not so clear, as *Propositions in Metaphysicks* or *Theorems in Geometry*, or indeed are not clear at all, cannot be objected against their credibility. They are in themselves as certain and as infallible; nay more certain and more infallible, if infallibility may be supposed to admit of degrees; but in reason, it cannot be expected, our knowledge of them should be as explicit and as clear: *Supernatural Truths* are not, cannot be determined or judged of by proofs, derived from nature or sense; they have proper

per proofs of their own, as all other arts and sciences have.

To judge of these things therefore by our narrow conceptions, is a most false and unwarrantable way of procedure ; and indeed it cannot seem strange, that so much *Error* and *Blasphemy* and all that direful train of *Heresies*, in matters relating to *God* and *Religion*, which have so much disturb'd the peace of *Christendome* , should spring from this one absurd and corrupt principle. Hence it was

also, that ^(a) *Orpheus*, and the other *Greek Poets* have dressed up their *Gods* in the habit and figure of men, and

cloathed them with all the infirmities and passions incident to humane nature, and hereby made way for all the debaucheries and superstitions, that lust could possibly suggest, or a troubled fancy invent. They made use of no other faculty to judg of *God*, but a gross ima-

gination ; ^(b) *Epicurus* upon this very slight pretence excluded *God* from having any thing to do in the ordering
and

(a) See the excellent discourse of *Plato* about this subject, toward the latter end of his second book *de Republica*, p. 377. Græc. tom. secundæ editione Ser- rani.

(b) In his Epistle to *Herodotus*, as it is extant in *Diogenes Laertius* — ἡ συμπαροῦσα θεογυμνασία καὶ φρονή-
σις καὶ ὁρῶν καὶ χεῖρες μαχεσθῆναι, ἀλλ'
ἐμμελεῖν καὶ πόσει καὶ ἀποσπένοντι τὰ νοσ-
τὸν ταῦτα γίνεσθαι. edit. Londinenfis

and governing of the world, because he fancied, this could not be done without anxiety and trouble, like the due management of a great charge or employment, which takes up ones whole time, and requires contrivance and study and foresight to keep things in an equal poise, to prevent disorders, to apply remedies

to the least inconveniences, that otherwise might quickly grow and improve into a mischief, and to secure all by an equal distribution of rewards and punishments; forgetting that God's power is infinite and inexhaustible; that his eyes reach from one end of the world to the other, and see into the very essences of things; that all things are at his absolute disposal and command; that trouble only arises either from fear of success, or when we are overwhelm'd with business, or our strength is not proportionable or any way sufficient to sustain so great a weight. Aetius presently rejects the eter-

nal

p. 285. — This he establisht as one of his *κρίσεις δέξαι*, or main principles of his Philosophy, τὸ μακρόν ἐστι ἀνθρώπων, ὅτι αὐτὸ ἀναγκαῖον ἔχει, ὅτι ἀλλὰ παύσει. ὅτι ὅτι ὁ γὰρ ἔστι χάρις σωφροσύνης. ἐν ἀδυναμίᾳ δὲ πάντ' ἐστὶ τοῦτον, p. 300. and laid down therefore in the first place by his great admirer and follower *Lucretius* in the beginning of his philosophical Poem, to make the better way for the *Atheism*, which was to follow, that is, to exclude God, with a fairer pretence, from having any thing to do, either with the framing or governing of the world, and to deny a providence: that censure, which *Cotta* in *Tully* mentions to have bin cast upon him by several, being exactly true — *Video nonnullis videri Epicurum, ne in offensionem Atheniensium caderet, verbis reliquisse Deos, se sustulisse, lib. 1. de Nat. Deorum*, speaking of this very *Atheistical aphorism*.

why, Epicurus is called god for having any thing to do with the world, see he has done with any thing a world.

*nal generation of the Son of God, because this does not in all things agree with natural generations ; and because it cannot be so with men, he impiously and dogmatically concludes, it is an impossible notion, and thinks he has reason for his blasphemy and peremptoriness, by laying down seven and forty arguments for it, as they are numbred and confuted by * Epiphanius in his Panarium. The same gross fancies have the Mahometans of this article of faith to this day, who deride the Christians, by asking impious questions concerning it, and even in their Devotion renounce it with a great deal of earnestness, with a far be it from thee, what the Christians impute to thee ; as if man were the measure and standard of all things, even of God himself, who made him, and who is of infinite perfection, beyond the utmost reach of fancy, or conception. His actions and understanding must needs as much transcend ours, as does his essence. His ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts. Isa. lv, 8.*

* In brevibus A-
nomorum,
quæ est
LXXVI.

2. This Hypothesis of theirs, that nothing is or ought to be believ'd but what is cleared up to the understanding by the evidence of the things

of the Christian Religion.

things themselves, does wholly take away the
Blessedness and Rewardableness annex to Faith.

33
2^d day may grow
abundant of faith.
2^d day may grow
abundant of faith.
2^d day may grow
abundant of faith.

One necessary condition to make any action capable of reward or commendation is, that it flow from a principle of liberty ; and herein man, who is endowed with reason, the only true foundation of it, has the preeminence above all other creatures, that act only by instinct, or the force of appetite, or by necessity of * Nature ; He becomes hereby as it were Lord of himself, and can act or not act, according as he is guided by counsel and rational motives, or meerly as it pleaseth him ; and according either to the right or ill use of this liberty, he is to be judg'd, whether he has deserved well or no. That *Chrystals* shoot out into curious and exactly regular figures, that the flakes of *Snow* are Hexagonal, and ten thousand other Rarities of Nature, are not to the commendation of the things themselves : They shew admirably the wisdom of the first contriver of them : the Artist, not the Pendulum, is praised, though it measures time so exactly, and performs all its various motions without any interruption or inequality, because this neces-

* Principiorum Philosophie prima, sect. XXXVII.

The Credibility of the Mysteries

farily arises from a due proportion of weights and wheels, and from a just adaptation of the several parts of it ; 'tis the perfection of a man, that he acts freely, and consequently that he is virtuous out of choice, notwithstanding all the allurements and inclinations of sense. And the like is to be said of the several *assents* of the mind ; if the truths of *Religion* were in themselves so clear and evident, that we could not but assent, whether we would or no, if they could be prov'd by arguments, deriv'd from sense or nature, where then would be the *blef-sedness of Faith* our *Saviour* speaks of, which belongs to those, who *have not seen, and yet have believed* ? when we have a clear and distinct perception of a thing, then we know it ; and he must be very stupid and very pertinacious, that will not submit to the truth, and evidence, and conviction of a demonstration. How ridiculous would it be to raise a dispute, and heap up arguments against clear evidence, and pretend dissatisfaction in the midst of so great certainty, as science affords ? If there were no difficulty in the notions, where were that Obedience of Faith, the Apostle St. *Paul* mentions ?

where

of the Christian Religion.

35

mystery.

where would be our submission and humility?
for a trial of which I am perswaded, that many
Mysteries are now proposed by God, which here-
after as a reward of our Faith shall be more
clearly made out to us, and that this shall be
one principal part of the glory that shall at-
tend the blessed in the other world, when we
shall be divested of those circumstances, that
now hinder the exertions of Reason, when our
understandings shall be enlightned, and our
capacities enlarged, and our thoughts heighte-
ned and exalted; not that it is possible for the
most refined and raised intellect ever to attain
to a full and comprehensive knowledg of them
(for the *Angels*, those glorious spirits, who at-
tend the throne, and are continually in the pre-
sence of God, humbly veil their faces and a-
dore) but that what we now know by Faith and
Revelation only, we shall have a somewhat clea-
rer insight into, and be as fully and satisfacto-
rily convinced of, as for instance, that there is
a *Trinity of Persons in one undivided Essence*, as if
we understood the manner of their several sub-
sistences.

many mysteries are now
proposed by God, and as by al-
together submission and a
humility.

3. It reflects upon the Wisdom and Power

It reflects upon the
wisdom & power of God.

The Credibility of the Mysteries

Belief

God may propose what
he pleases but a command
to believe it.

of God, who may, if he please, propose these things to us and command us to believe them. For that God may do this, who can question? or deny, that we are as much obliged to give up our judgments and understandings, as our wills, to his will, to assent to any speculation or truth of doctrine revealed by him, as to any mode of instituted worship commanded by him, or any precept of Morality; and that I am not to object and throw in my little conjectures and probabilities, because it is not altogether, or in the least, evident to my reason, when the nature of the thing renders it impossible that it should, or if it did not, yet his command should be enough to force my assent? now to fancy, that nothing is or ought to be credible, but what can be made out and cleared up to the understanding by the evidence of the things themselves, destroys this supposition, which has its certainty from, and is supported by, several of the divine attributes. The Wisdom and Power of God are both infinite, and therefore he knows more, and can do more, than what we possibly can conceive: otherwise we must equal our little knowledge, which we chiefly

chiefly derive from the images and representations of things in our minds, and which every contemptible insect and vegetable is too big for, with his ; and upon the same account, we must fancy our power equal too : which is the effect of an irrational pride and madness, like that of the *Apostate Angels*, and by consequence, throw off our dependence upon him, and deny to yield obedience to his laws, because they do as much cross our vicious and corrupt inclinations, as the *Mysteries* of our *Faith* do our narrow conceptions and sentiments. An infinite understanding only can fully comprehend an infinite perfection ; such a proportion between the faculty and the object being altogether necessary : for if it could be comprehended by a finite intellect, it would immediately cease to be infinite. How insufferable then is such an insolence ! How vain and foolish are such imaginations ! and every high thing, as the *Apostle* speaks, extravagant fancies and conceits, that get into the brain, that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God, which ought to be captivated and made subject upon the highest Reason in the World to the obedience

The Credibility of the Mysteries

ence and doctrine of Christ : which will appear by descending to the

2. Second Particular, I proposed to make good, that the Christian Religion requires us to believe its Mysteries upon such grounds, as we cannot reject without doing violence to our faculties, and consequently, that the rejecting and disbelieving them must be unreasonable.

These grounds are 2. Now the grounds are chiefly these two.

1. That we believe & admit divine revelations.

1. That we believe and admit the divine Revelations.

2. That we submit our understandings to the revelation.

2. That we yield obedience and submit our understandings and all the powers of our minds to the Will of God.

The divine revelations are to be admitted, because God knows all things, and to deceive is repugnant to the holiness of his Nature.

1. That we believe and admit divine Revelations ; because God is of infinite veracity, and to deceive is repugnant to the holiness of his Nature ; there is an utter impossibility in it.

Now if we repose so much trust and confidence in a friend, because we have tried him, and know that he is a man of great integrity, and that he abhors the very thought of deceiving any one with the least falsehood, and speaks exactly according to his knowledge without any reserved or secret meaning or equivocation, or

con-

concealing part of the proposition in his mind that it may be otherwise understood than he intends it ; much more with all the readiness of submission of mind imaginable are we to receive, whatever comes from God, without the least demur, or doubt, or contradiction. This an infinite and eternal rectitude does justly challenge from us ; for God may as soon deny his being, as falsifie his word ; so that whoever goes about to question or disbelieve any thing that God has revealed, will run himself upon one of these two gross and absurd impieties, either doubt whether God himself has an exact and perfect knowledg of those things, he has propos'd to our belief, or whether he has been just and true to deliver what he knows.

It is a most rational conclusion of St. John 1 Epist. v. 10. *he that believeth not God, has made him a liar.* No difficulty then can or ought to deter me from the belief of a thing, if God has once revealed it ; nor can the mind of man possibly desire a greater satisfaction than this.

2. That we yield obedience and submit our understandings and all the powers of our minds to the will of God, for

Revelation
2. a necessary absurdity
follows if he believeth
that God has revealed
it. For hath not a per-
fect knowledg of things
which he hath not been
true to deliver as he
knows.

understanding
It is reasonable that
we should understandings
of the will of God.

1. There are 1000's
of things above
our understanding.

1. That there are thousands of things *de facto* above our knowledge and conception cannot be deemed by any, without the highest immodesty, an unjust postulatam.

2. The more our
knowledge is abstracted
from sensible, & more
difficult is our
apprehension.

2. That all or at least most of our knowledge deriving from sense, the more things are freed and abstracted from the entanglements of gross matter, the more difficult is the conception; because they fall less under the examination of our senses, from which we receive so great prejudices in our infancy and childhood, which make that deep impresson on our fancies, that they are not easily to be removed.

3. God may command
us to assent to those
above our comprehension.

3. God by virtue of his absolute dominion and sovereignty may command us to assent to things above our reach, and conception, and knowledge. Faith is not to choose its *Object*, no more than a mans will can prescribe and set to him a Law, because its whole and only power consists in the liberty of obeying or not obeying of a Law prescrib'd by a superiour Power. Whatsoever Doctrine therefore is delivered and revealed by God, becomes immediately credible, by reason of the authority, that does accompany it, and enforce it upon

us. The Articles of *Faith* carry along with them sufficient motives of *Credibility*, but then these motives must not be fetched from the nature of the things themselves, as if they were to be so evident, that our Reason might fully discover their connexion and dependance, but from without; that is, my *Faith* is rightly grounded, and an obligation lies upon me to believe, what is proposed by God, if it be evidenced so to be, by just and rational proofs; and if the authority be certain and infallible: God therefore declaring his Will, and confirming the Revelations he has made of it by his divine Power; this latter is a sufficient proof, and a just and rational ground of my Belief; for how absurd would it be for any one, because he cannot comprehend and make out a thing fully, which in the nature of it, and by reason of our weakness and incapacity, is incomprehensible, and which he ought to acknowledg to be such, unless he will presume to measure Eternity and grasp Infinity with a span, therefore to doubt of so plain a truth, as this is, that the divine Power cannot be made use of to confirm any *Proposition*, but what is exactly true and cer-

G

tain?

The Credibility of the Mysteries

tain? so that this is not to forego our *Reason*, as the *Socinians* plead, for nothing is more agreeable to the principles of right Reason, but to act according to it: and therefore to say that we *Believe* ~~we~~ *know not what*, if they mean, that the objects of our Faith cannot be proved to exist with the same kinds of proofs, as what is presented to our senses, or as a propriety may be demonstrated of the subject of a speculative Science, this cannot be any prejudice at all to our belief, because in all Faith, whether Humane or Divine, there cannot be the same clearness and evidence, but that there are such Objects of our Faith we are as certainly assured, as if we had a particular demonstration of each.

Now that the *Mysteries of Christianity* are confirm'd by such an authority, and therefore are to be believed by us, and consequently that the *Christian Religion* requires our assent to no more, than what is apparent to be *God's Will*, we have this assurance, that they were attested and made good by the miracles of our *Saviour*; by these he proved his Commission to be deriv'd from *Heaven*. This was the belief of the *Jews* in general, both Learned and Unlearned. *Nicodemus*

was

Saviour
Our Saviour proved his commission to be derived from Heaven by miracles.

was fully convinced of the truth and evidence of it, *Joh.iii. 2. Rabbi, we know, that thou art a Teacher come from God, for no man can do those miracles, that thou dost, except God be with him.* In the case of the blind man, who was restored to his sight, the doubt was rational, *How can a man, that is a sinner do such miracles?* *Joh. ix. 16. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing, v. 33.* that is, he could not do such things, as are above the power of a meer Man, which we see him do. It was nothing, but a most unjust prejudice to our *Saviours Person*, and to the meanness of his Birth and Parentage, arising from a false principle concerning the temporal Kingdom of the *Messias*, through a misunderstanding of the Prophecies, that made them, against their Belief and Conscience, reject the authority of so many evident and often repeated miracles; and though they would not acknowledg him for their *Messias*, that came in a way of humility and meekness, so opposite to their humours and expectations, who thought of nothing, but triumphs and revenge; yet they are forced to acknowledg, that the *Messias* could not do greater; and lastly our *blessed Saviour* appeals

33.
John 9. 33.
If a man were not of God he could do nothing, v. 33. that is, he could not do such things, as are above the power of a meer man which we see him do.

The Credibility of the Mysteries

to miracles, as to his credentials, as being a most rational motive to work faith in the minds of the most scrupulous; *if ye believe not me, believe the works that I do.* This then is a sufficient confirmation of our *Saviours* mission, and of the doctrine *He* and the *Apostles* delivered from him, and preach'd through the several parts of the World, which *they* travelled, and after put in writing for the benefit and greater satisfaction of all succeeding Generations. Nor are we now at this great distance of time to call for new signs from Heaven, or to desire a farther confirmation of what hath been received so universally for so many successions of Ages. The holy *Scriptures* are the authentick Registers of the *Doctrine* and *Revelations* of God, and that I may add this by the way, were they but of humane authority, they deserved not to be drolled upon, but to be treated with an equal, if not a greater, respect, than *Polybius*, or *Livy*, not only upon the account of their Antiquity, but for those excellent remarks they contain, and the *Theists* of our Age may as well doubt, whether there were such a man as *Cyrus* and *Alexander*, as *Moses* and *Joshua*, and question whether

whether *Cicero* wrote those *Orations*, and the other excellent Books, that go under his name, or *Virgil* those admired Poems, as whether *St. Mathew* or *St. John*, who were the known Disciples of *Christ*, and conversed daily with him for above three years together, wrote those *Gospels*, which contain the *History* and *Acts* of his *Life* and *Death*.

Upon these evidences our assent is raised, which make it rational and just; our Faith is resolv'd into the testimony of *God*, which is only the rule of it, we believe nothing, but what our Saviour and his Apostles taught, for which we have the authority of their words, and what the whole number of *Christian* People embraced and received, as the just and true meaning of them. Now because we cannot reconcile these express and clear Revelations of the *Gospel*, laid down in plain expressions, as that *Christ is the son of God, was in the beginning with God, before the world was made, God manifested in the flesh, God blessed for ever*, and that *he and the father are one* (not to descend to the other Articles, which are laid down as clearly) with our narrow conceptions of things, is most irrationally.

nally to conclude against God in favour of our selves, meerly for this only reason, because we cannot tell or understand, how it can or should be, when he hath told us expressly it is so. Hereupon they heap up strange and absurd interpretations of *Scripture*, and which are impossible to be true; they deny to words their proper, and natural and genuine significations; they fancy nothing but improprieties and ambiguities of expression; and admit of absurd notions for all their high vaunts and pretences to reason, which destroy the very design and institution of *Christianity*. Thus our most *blessed Saviour, the only begotten son of God* must be only for κτ χάρις, or κτ προκοπήν κτ ἀρετήν βίβ, God only by grace and favour, and for the holiness and

(a) Τὸν ὃ χειρὶν σεφάτω λέγουσι
τ' ἀληθείας, κτ χειρὶν ὑπὸ Θεῷ κτ σε-
κοπήν κτ σωφροσύνην ἀναγωγῆς τ' ἀνω-
θεν αὐτὸν γινώσκουσιν. Epiphanius
in heresi Ebionacorum. q. x. est XXX. sect.
XVIII, ex edit. Petavii. Parisiis 1622.
pag. 142.

(b) Epiphanius in heresi Aionorum,
quæ est LXIX. sect. XVIII. p. 741.

(c) Gregorius Abulpharagius, in histo-
riâ Dynastiarum, Arabicè, p. 129. edit.
Oxon. 1663. Eusebius in Annalibus Alex-
andrinis Arabicè, edit. Oxon. parte pri-
mâ p. 397. & 441.

excellence of his life, as (a) *Ebion*,
and (b) *Arius*, and (c) *Paulus*
Samosatenus used to blas-
pheme of old, or *Deus Fa-*
ctus, a Created God only, such
by Designation and Office, as
our modern Socinians impi-
ously distinguish, when, not

only the name, but the essential Attributes of

the

Christ

Not not a deity
fearing only, when
He not only he
name but the es-
sential attributes of
the godhead are as-
cribed to him.

the *Godhead* are ascribed to him. Thus the Do-
ctrine of the *Ever blessed Trinity*, which is clearly

contain'd in the form of ^(d)

Baptism, as might fully be
made good against the ex-
ceptions and cavils of *Wol-*
fogenius, and in *St. Job. v. 7.* (a)

^(e) Verse written by the same
hand that wrote all the rest
of the *Epistle*, as it is most
evident from the verses in
conjunction with it, which
would be altogether defective
and imperfect without it,
however it be omitted in the
Alexandrine Manuscript, rather
by chance (for that is not the

only omission in that Copy) than design, as if
it had favoured the Heresie of the *Amitrinita-*
rians;) this Doctrine of the *Trinity*, I say, must
be exploded, because they cannot satisfy their
bold curiosity, as why the emanation of the
Deity stops at three *Hypostases*, that is, why the
Divine Essence is not communicated to more
than *Three Persons*, and how it can be Commu-

(d) This argument drawn from the
Form of Baptism, is generally made use
of by all the antient *Fathers*, against the
blasphemy of *Sabellius*, *Arius*, and the
rest of the Hereticks, who had depart-
ed from the true faith, establish'd at first,
to follow phantasies and inventions of
their own. But reserving these nu-
merous citations for another work, I
shall content my self at present to say
with the Author of the *Breviarium fidei*
adversus Arianos, who lived above 1200
years since, put out by the most learned
Sirmondus, to whom the world is so much
obliged, for his publishing several writ-
tings of the antients, out of MSS. —

*Qui [Spiritus sanctus] si Deus non esset, non
in baptismo in uno nomine Patris patri
& filio sociaretur, sicut scriptum est, ubi
regulam baptismi posuit ipse Dominus: Ite,
inquit, baptizate omnes gentes in nomine
Patris, & Filii, & Spiritus Sancti. Quod
solum testimonium detereat hereticis sufficere
ad credulitatem insuperabilem Trinitatis, quia
nec ipsi audent aliter baptizare, ne regulam
Domini corrumpere videantur. Et ubi unum
nomen dicitur, ibi & major & minor ex-
cluditur.*

(e) Of this see the Appendix.

nicated

Trinity.

It is not as some have
said, that the very
beginnings of
Christ. proved.

nicated, and yet altogether remain *Undivided*, and the like. That this *Article* was explicitly believed in the very beginnings of *Christianity*, may, to omit at present other wayes of proofs, be evinced hence, that the *Heathens* of those times used to upbraid the *Christians* with the belief of so unlikely a *Doctrine*. Thus *Critias* in the Dialogue *Philopatris* (which if not *Lucians*, was written however in *Trajan's* time, whose victories and successes in the *East*, and particularly in the taking of *Ctesiphon* and *Babylon* and other places from the *Persians*, and in repressing the incursions of the *Scythians*, as hapning just at that time, are there mentioned) when *Triephon* had expressed the belief and sense of the *Christians* about this *Article*, by adjuring Ὑψιμέδουσα Θεὸν μέγαν ἄμβροτον, ὕραν ἰώντα υἱὸν πατρὸς, πνεῦμα ἐκπορευόμενον, ἐκ τριῶν, καὶ ἐξ ἑνὸς ἰεῖα; ταῦτα νόμιζε Ζῆνα καὶ ἡγεῖ Θεόν, makes a mock at it, and replies with a great deal of impudent raillery, ἀρετμέειν μὴ διδάσκεις, καὶ ὀρθὸς ἢ Ἀρετμετική, καὶ γὰρ ἀρετμέεις, ὡς Νικόμαχ^{ος} ὁ Γεράσιον^{ος}, οὐκ οἶδα ἢ λέγεις ἐν ἰεῖα, ἰεῖα ἓν, μὴ τὴν τετρακτὴν φῆς τὴν Πυθαγόρεος; ἢ τὴν ὀγδοάδα καὶ τριακάδα.

So far is that from having the least truth in it, which the Enemies and Opposers of this *Doctrine* affirm, without the least shew of Reason and Authority, that it derives wholly from *Pythagoras* and *Plato*, and was learned in their Schools, and afterwards drest up by the *Fathers*, who were admirers of that *Philosophy*, and not heard of till the *Third or Fourth Century*. So that upon the whole it will appear, that the *Christian Religion* has just and sure evidences, and therefore to fancy, which is the only thing they can alledge in behalf of their Unbelief, that nothing is or can be believed, but what ought to be fully comprehended by the Understanding, is so foolish, so unjust, so unreasonable a thing, that nothing but intolerable Pride and Obstinacy can possibly suggest such a Thought, and consequently that before any one can become an *Arrian* or a *Socinian*, he must forego his Reason, and forget that *God* is of infinite Perfection, and forget too, that he himself is a Man.

To draw towards a Period. *Christianity* being a *Great Mystery*, and necessarily such :

Modesty.

we must be modest
enquiring into it arduously
of it to a not expect a
comprehensive knowledge
of ym.

The Credibility of the Mysteries

It is but a natural inference, that all our enquiries into the Articles of it be sober and modest; that we expect not a comprehensive knowledge of them; that we be not too busy and curious in our Searches into the Secrets of God; that being conscious to our selves of the defects, and shallowness, and weakness of our Reason in lesser matters; how imperfect and untrue oftentimes our collections are of sensible beings, to which our faculties may seem proportionate; and to what errors and delusions we are subject, by taking up false notions, by fancy and prejudice; we learn to be *wise unto sobriety*, and *not to think of our selves, above what we ought to think*. It was nothing at first, but an overbold curiosity, not content with *Revelation*, and with just proofs of it, that raised in the mind thoughts of Disbelief; but it stopt not here; it soon improved into a proud conceit of mastering all the difficulties of *Religion* by the strength of Reason; and to this we may justly impute the original and growth of all those *Heresies* and *Blasphemies*, that have been vented from the very first Preaching of the Gospel to this day.

day. It is a vain thing to think to do this; 'tis a passing beyond the bounds which God and our own Nature hath set us; a piece of Sacrilegious rashness, as *Salvian* justly words it, in his third Book *De Gubernatione Dei*, speaking of the various dispensations of Providence: *Hoc ipsum genus quasi Sacrilega temeritatis est, si plus scire cupias quam sinaris*: The Articles of Faith, as they are not to be tried, so neither to be proved by the Principles of Mathematicks or Natural Philosophy. It is as great folly to attempt it, as to expect it, both arising from a wantonness of Wit, which quickly looses it self in a Labyrinth of wild Opinions, and pleasing it self with new Notions and Ideas, is more and more perplexed and entangled, and is scarce ever reducible to a right and sober temper.

What ill success the *Schoolmen* have had in their attempts this way upon the Articles of Religion, *Christendome* has long since had sad experience of; these men guilty of the other extream would scarce acknowledg any thing of *Mystery* in it; all things seemed so clear to them, as if they had had a particu-

Sacrilege

Salvian: sacrilega temeritas

Hoc ipsum genus quasi sacrilega temeritatis est si plus scire cupias quam sinaris.

The Credibility of the Mysteries

lar Revelation ; they have thrown open the *Vail*, that covers the *Ark* ; they define boldly, and obtrude their Conjectures for Oracles. *St. Paul* and *St. John* shall be explained and proved by the Writings of *Plato* and *Aristotle* ; thus prostituting the Majesty of the Sacred *Scriptures*, and corrupting the Simplicity of the *Christian Religion* by their niceties and subtilities of Distinctions, and exposing it the more to the Cavils of *Hereticks*, who observing the falseness of their Principles, and the weakness and incompetency of their Proofs, are more encouraged to reject the truth of it. Hereby too a *Contentious* and *Disputative Theology* has been introduced in the *Schools* ; and unnecessary and bold questions started, impossible to be resolved with any satisfaction, which perplex and confound the Understanding, and are so far from *Building* us up in our *Holy Faith*, and from explaining the Doctrine of it, that it has scarce suffered by any one thing more. Some things we may understand, but we see more to admire, which with all our art and subtility we can never attain to. It is enough, that the *Chri-*
stian

stian Religion doth perswade us by Rational Arguments to the acknowledgment of its Doctrine, that it laies down sufficient grounds of the certainty and necessity of our Belief, that it gives us all the assurance we can, with any modesty, pretend to, and all the proofs the nature of the things, proposed to our belief, are capable of and will bear. 'Tis Faith in *Christ*, that He is the *Son of God* and the *Saviour of the World*, that denominates us *Christians*; to deny this, how excellent a Person soever we make him for Meekness and Holiness of Life, is to renounce *Christianity*, and in effect to turn *Mahometans*; for they acknowledg *Christ* to have been a *Great Prophet*, to have been *born of a Virgin*, to have been *assumed into Heaven*, and the like. *Satis sit pro universis rationibus Author Deus*; as the same *Salvian* has it. This is that, that is equivalent to ten

thousand *Demonstrations*; this will level all those objections, that are raised against the *Mysteries of Christianity*; that will silence all the *Sophistry of Corrupt Reason*, and cut off all those Arguments, which presumptuous Men are wont to make; and certainly if we rightly

con-

Deus.

*Author deus. qd best reason
satis sit pro universis
rationibus author deus.*

The Credibility of the Mysteries

Christianity

Christy more worthy for being mysteries. But it shows that the doctrines are more worthy of the infinite majesty & perfection of God, by how much they are above the reach of man.

consider it, the Mysteries of Christianity, as they are proposed in the Scriptures, are by reason of the great difficulties, that attend the conception of them, so far from being incredible, that they ought thereby to become more credible; that is, they are more worthy of the infinite Majesty and perfection of God, by how much they are above the reach of our Faculties.

Christy

Christy is a mystery of Godliness, a gift of God to have an influence upon our lives.

2. Let us remember that Christianity is a Mystery of Godliness, and consequently that the Great Mysteries of it ought to have an influence upon our Lives and Practices. As on the one hand, to say, that these Great Articles of our Faith are nice Speculations, and the explicit Belief of them, as they are proposed, not necessary, and to question that Sense of them, in which they have always been received by the Catholick Church, is to undermine the Fundamentals of Christianity; So on the other side, it takes off very much from the obligation to Obedience, and dulls those affections, which a reflexion on these Great Mysteries must needs cause in the mind.

That God should send his Son into the world

world to discover this Mystery to us in Person, and in order to our Redemption, was the Effect of an *Infinite Wisdom*, and of an *Infinite Love*; that God should be *Manifested in the Flesh* for our sakes, and submit himself to the weaknesses, and imperfections, and contumelies of the humane nature; that the *Second Person of the Trinity*, Co-essential and Co-eternal with the Father, should condescend to assume flesh, and therein to suffer; a reflection on this cannot but fill us with admiration and love. One great part of the Worship we owe to God consists in our admiring his infinite Perfections; all our Praises and Thanksgivings are but the outward significations of this, and faint expressions of our thoughts, which loose themselves in the contemplation of them. Now these *Mysteries* afford us eternal matter for our admiration. Besides, what greater obligation to Obedience can there possible be, than the Revelation of this *Mystery*, upon which our Salvation is founded? A Holy and Religious Life then is the best evidence of our belief of these *Articles of Christianity* beyond all subtilty of Disputation. This especially

Worship
Admiring God's perfections
a great part of our
worship.

Life
A holy life is best evidence
of belief of Christ.

pecially concerns us, who are dignified with the *Holy Priesthood*, who are *Ministers of Christ*, and *Stewards of the Mysteries of God*. This shews, that we do more than barely assent to the truth of them, when they produce in us all, both *Priests* and *Lay*, these effects, for which they were principally discovered ; that so living in obedience to the will of *God* revealed to us by his *Son*, whom he sent out of his own Bosom, and in all holy conversation and godliness, we may at last be admitted to the sight and fruition of his *glorious Godhead*, to sing Praises and Hallelujah's to the *blessed Trinity* for ever and ever, Amen.

Appendix.



I T must be confessed, that this
Verse is not to be met with in
several Old MSS. as particu-
larly in the mentioned Alex-
andrine, now in the *Kings Li-*

brary at *St. James's*, brought out of *Egypt* by *Cy-
 rillus Lucari*, when he removed from the See of
Alexandria to the *Patriarchate of Constantinople*,
 who was strangled by the *Turks* in the year
 1638, and sent to *K. Charles I.* though not so
 antient, I believe, as is pretended, as if it had
 been wrote by the hand of *Thecla*, an *Egyptian*
 Woman of an honourable Extraⁿtion, and a
 Martyr for the *Christian Faith*, condemned to
 the *Amphitheatre* under *Dioclesian*, as *Eusebius* re-
 lates in the Supplement to the Eight Book of
 his *Ecclesiastical History*, which is found in se-
 veral Copies, if it be his (*cap. 3.*) before the first
 Council of *Nice*, which is barely said and con-
 jectured; and I suppose, that it may be pro-
 ved, that the *Vatican exemplar* is the more Genu-

John 5. 7.

*John 5. 7. There are 3
 of bear record in him
 of father, of son &
 of h. 9. 2 of 3 are one*

*This verse not met
 with in several old mss.*

ine of the two, and comes nigher the Original. It is omitted also in an ancient Manuscript in the Archives of our *Colledg Library*, containing the *New Testament* entire (except the *Apocalypsi*) with the *Psalter* and several *Hymns* collected out of the *Old Testament*, the words ἐν ᾧ γῆ being also wanting in the eight verse, and in several others. Upon this the Enemies of this Doctrine triumph and boldly pretend, that it was inserted by the *Catholicks*: Thus to mention only one for all, *Socinus* himself in his Commentary on these words—*Satis constat illa esse Adulterina, & ab hominibus, qui suum dogma de trino & uno Deo quâcunq; ratione defendere & propagare volebant, in hunc locum infarsita*. But let the appeal lye to any indifferent Person, which is most likely, that those, who professed their belief of this Doctrine, which was grounded too upon several other Texts of *Scripture*, and was derived down to them from the first Ages of the *Church*, and which they contended for with so much earnestness, should without any necessity dare commit, such a Forgerie, which could not but be taken notice of by their watchful Enemies, or that this should be done

by

John 5. 7.
not inserted by Catholics

by the Opposers of this *Doctrin*e, who were ar- *This text raised out*
raigned in general, by all the Catholick Writers, *by it opposers of it*
 who had to do with them, as falsifiers of the *doctrine:*
 sacred Records, and were so much concern'd
 to do it in defence of their private tenets and
 fancies, and especially to raze this Text, with
 which they were so oppress'd, out of several Co-
 pies, from which by Transcripts it might easi-
 ly be propagated into others: And consequent-
 ly it is not to be admired, that several of the
Fathers, no not *Athanasius* himself, nor *Cyril* of
Alexandria, nor *St. Hilary*, who defended with
 so much learning the truth of this great *Myste-*
ry, did not make use of this Testimony, *why several of these*
they do not make
lighting upon some of these Transcripts; which *use of it testimony*
be not met with some of
of transcripts, it is way
to be said also for St. Auslin, in his Book 3.
Chap. 22. against Maximinus an Arian Bishop,
for St. Leo in his Epistle to Flavian Bishop of
Constantinople, against the Heresie of Eutyches,
Ep. 10. Cap. 5. for Eucherius de questionibus N.
Testamenti, and for Oecumenius in his Commen-
tary on this Epistle, and several others. The
same reason holds for the omission of it in the
Syriack, Arabick, and Ethiopick Translations, the
two former of which, as they are now extant, as

Tom. 6. ex Ep.
 dit. Erasmi;
 Basil. 1542.
 p. 754.

John 5. 7.
omitted in Syriack
Arabick & Ethiopick
translations for some
reason.

is most probable, were made long since the times of *Arius*, notwithstanding the pretensions of some to a far greater Antiquity, the last is confessedly of a later Date. The scarcity of Copies in those days, and the malicious industry and cunning of the *Hereticks* render the conjecture sufficiently probable, if no Copy were to be found with this Verse entire, and that we had only the authority of some of the Antients, who cite it as authentick, as having met with it in their Books. The *Divines* of *Lovain* in collating the *N.T.* with a great number of *Latin* Copies, found it only wanting in five. *R. Stephanus* in his Edition of the *N.T.* had the use of fifteen or sixteen old *Greek MSS.* above half of which retain'd it: So the Edition of the *N.T.* at *Complutum* compared with antient *MSS.* printed in the beginning of the Restauration of Polite Literature in *Christendome*, at the expences of the great *Cardinal Ximenes*, only with this variation, ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσὶ οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῷ θεα-
νῶ, ὁ Πατὴρ, ὁ Λόγος, καὶ τὸ ἅγιον Πνεῦμα; καὶ οἱ
τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσι. Thus *Erasmus* confesses he met with a Manuscript in *England*, which he calls by the name of *Codex Britannicus*, which had
the

So in 5, 7
for w^h copy found.

the whole seventh Verse, as we now read it, and the eight Verse, the latter part thus altered, καὶ ἰεῖς εἰσὶν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῇ γῇ, Πνεῦμα, Ὑδωρ, καὶ Ἄιμα εἰς τὴν μαρτυρίαν τῶν ἀνθρώπων.

I shall lay no stress upon two Writings, which pass under the name of *Athanasius*, where this Verse is cited, because it is not to be met with in those larger works of his, which are acknowledged genuine, the one is an account of a disputation, according to the title, had with *Arius*

in the *Council of Nice*; but the title is faulty, as appears from the Discourse it self; nor was *A-*

rius the Person disputed with there, but one of his followers; and the reason of the mistake of

the title may be ascrib'd to an ignorant *Libra-*

rius, putting down *Arius* for *Arianus*, and the

Dialogue not real, but supposed, as was usual a-

mongst the *Fathers*, introducing the *Hereticks*

pleading their Cause, and the *Orthodox* refuting their Cavils and defending the Truth. And if this may pass for likely, there can be no great reason to suspect the Authenticalness of it, the

(a) words are, πρὸς δὲ τέτοις πᾶσιν Ἰωάννης φάσκει καὶ οἱ τεῖς τὸ ἐν εἶσι. The other is in a Book extant only in *Latine* (b) lib. 1. de unita

Deitate

Dialogue
The book entitled
Dialogue of Athanasius
with Arius, is faulty.
For if dispute was
with Arius, a follower of
Arius.

(a) 1 Vol. p.
147. Paris.
1627.

(b) Tom. 2 p.
553.

Athanasius 62

Appendix.

Athanasius de unitate
deitate Trinitatis in
nomen & his pro perchance
wrote not many yrs after
his time.

Deitate Trinitatis ad Theophilum, dicente Joanne
Evangelistâ in Epistolâ sua, tres sunt, qui testimoni-
um dicunt in Cælo, Pater, & Verbum, & Spiritus.

But this piece, I confess, is very justly rejected
as none of his, though perchance wrote not ma-
ny years after his time. St. Cyprian, who suffered
Martyrdom about the year of Ch. 258. Galienus
and his Son Valerianus being then Emperours,
about sixty years before the calling of the Coun-
cil of Nice, in his book *de unitate Ecclesiæ Catho-*
licæ, cites this Text expressly, as found in the Co-
pies of his time: — *Dicit Dominus, Ego & Pater*
unum sumus, & iterum de Patre & Filio & Spi-
ritu Sancto, & hi Tres unum sunt. It is not any
way material to the design and purpose of this
Scholion to inquire, in what sense St. Cyprian
understood these words, but only to vindicate
the antiquity of the Copies, that retained this
reading, though it might easily be proved that
it was a thing usual with the Fathers, as no one
can be ignorant, who has turn'd over their Wri-
tings, to interpret places of Scriptures some-
times, not according to their primary intent,
but by way of accomodation. Which testimo-
ny is so clear and convincing that Sandius in

his

Scripture

the fathers touching
this part place of script-
ure, by way of accom-
odation, & not accord-
ing to their pri-
mary intent.

his *Appendix quæstionum Paradoxarum*, uses all his art and skill to avoid the force of it, by pretending, that several things have been changed, added, taken away, and some other way varied in the *Epistle*, as appears by the observation of *Possevinus*, who took the pains to compare the printed Copies with four *MSS.* and the acknowledgment of others, *Perkins*, *James*, and *Rivet* : from which premises he concludes very boldly upon a meer possibility, that this place was never cited by that blessed *Martyr*, but put in by some body else ; *Quam facile itaq; etiam hic locus interseri potuit ab his, qui non exborruerunt sacras litteras corrumpere propter metum Hereticorum.* But first this is barely said without the least proof, and without the authority of any *MS.* Secondly neither *Pamelius* nor *Rigaltius*, nor any other, as I know of, who put forth *St. Cyprian*, make mention of any various reading in this place, all agreeing in it. Now that this *Epistle* is *St. Cyprians* is undoubted: *St Cyprian* himself referring to it, and that the reading is the same now, as it was in the old Copies written above eleven hundred and forty years ago, appears from *Fulgentius*, who not only cites this seventh verse in
his

p. 772.

his book *de fide Catholicâ adversus Pintam Episcopum Arianum*, in his testimonies *de Trinitate*, and in his book *de Trinitate ad Felicem Notarium*, c. 4. which thus begins, *En babes in brevi alium esse Patrem, alium Filium, alium Spiritum sanctum, alium & alium in personâ, non aliud & aliud in natura; & idcirco ego, inquit, & pater unum sumus; unum, ad naturam referre nos docens, sumus, ad personas: similiter & illud. Tres sunt, inquit, qui testimonium dicunt in Cælo, Pater, Verbum, & Spiritus, & hi tres unum sunt. Audiat Sabellius, sumus: audiat tres: & credat esse tres personas, & non sacrilego corde blasphemet, dicendo, ipsum sibi esse Patrem, ipsum sibi Filium, ipsum sibi Spiritum sanctum, tanquam modo quodam seipsum gignat, aut modo quodam a seipso ipse procedat, cum hoc etiam in naturis creatis minime inveniri possit, ut aliquid seipsum gignere valeat. Audiat scilicet & Arius unum, & non differentis filium dicat esse naturæ, cum*

(a) p. 591 ex Editione Theophili Ranaudi, Soc. J'en, Parisiis 1671. printed with St. Leo, Maximus Taurinensis, and four others which make up the heptas præsulorum.

natura diversa unum dici nequeat, (a) but cites this very place of St. Cyprian, in his

p. 447.

book *contra objectiones Arianorum*, in his answer to the tenth or last objection. His words are these, *In Patre & Filio, & Spiritu sancto unitatem sub-*

substantiæ accipimus, personas confundere non audemus; beatus enim Iohannes Apostolus testatur, dicens, tres sunt, qui testimonium perhibent in Cælo, Pater, Verbum, & Spiritus, & hi tres unum sunt. Quod etiam beatissimus Martyr Cyprianus in Epistolâ de unitate Ecclesiæ confitetur, dicens, qui pacem Christi & concordiam rumpit, adversus Christum facit: qui alibi præter Ecclesiam colligit, Christi Ecclesiam spargit. Atque ut unam Ecclesiam unius Dei esse monstraret, hæc confestim testimonia de Scripturâ inseruit, dicit Dominus, Ego & Pater unum sumus, & iterum, de Patre & Filio & Spiritu sancto scriptum est, & hi tres unum sunt. If it be said, that St. Cyprian cited only the latter part of the 8. v. where the *vulgar Latine* has those very words, *& hi tres unum sunt* ^(b) and that thus *Facundus, Episcopus Hermianensis*, in the time of *Iustinian*, to whom he dedicates his book, which he wrote *pro defensione trium capitulorum Concilii Chalcedonensis*, seems to understand it, without taking any notice of the 7. v. citing this place of St. Cyprian, though by a lapse of his memory he saies it is to be found in *Epistolâ sive libro, quem de Trinitate scripsit*: I reply first in general, that [*in*] might easily be left out by the oscitancy of the *Librarii*, not to say, razed out by the Hereticks; the *Syriack Interpreter* reading in his *Greek Copy*, what we find in

(b) lib. 1. p. 16.
ex Edit. J. Sir-
mondi Parisiis
1629.

ours, as to the latter part, καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσι, and accordingly translating it so, & tres sunt testes, Spiritus & Aqua & Sanguis, & hi tres in uno sunt بسم Bechad, and so the Arabick Interpreter واحد في in uno, only the Æthiopick conforming to the present reading of the vulgar Latine. But what will they say to the Alexandrine MS. which they so much adore, which has the same reading, οἱ τρεῖς εἰσι οἱ μαρτυροῦντες, τὸ πνεῦμα, καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ, καὶ τὸ αἷμα, καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσι; which are the words also of our MS. so in the Copies, which Oecumenius followed οἱ τρεῖς εἰσι οἱ μαρτυροῦντες, τὸ πνεῦμα, καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ, καὶ τὸ αἷμα, καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσι. St. Hierom's translation leaves out in the 8.v. & hi tres unum or in unum sunt, and so the Greek of Arias Montanus, and the Complutensian Edition; in the Margin of which later it is noted, that Aquinas in the exposition of the second decretal de summa Trinitate against Abbot Joachim, who perversely interpreting the end of the 7.v. of the unity of will and consent, alledges the end of the 8.v. for his authority and justification, had made this observation, *sed hoc in veris exemplaribus non habetur, sed dicitur esse appositum ab Hereticis Arianis ad pervertendum intellectum sanum auctoritatis præmissæ de unitate essentiae trium personarum*. I suppose the great respect

respect *Aquinas* had for the *vulgar Latin*, made him rather suspect the whole to be added, than that it was ill translated, which he would easily have acknowledged, had he consulted any *Gr. MS.* But this kind of learning they were not acquainted with in that Age of Scholastical ignorance and barbarousness. Secondly, as they take it for granted, that this was the reading of the *vulgar Latine* at that time, so they more vainly and weakly suppose, that *St. Cyprian* made use of the same *vulgar Latine* edition, the contrary of which appears in several of his citations, and it is more likely, that he might translate so literally the latter part of the 7. v. and not at all regard the 8. v. or the vulgar translation, and so it appears from the testimony of *Fulgentius*, cited above, that he understood it.

Afterward when several, out of an evil design to overthrow the *Mystery* of the most blessed and adorable *Trinity*, omitted in their translations of the *Scriptures* into the *Latin Tongue* this Verse (a liberty which, it seems, every Pretender almost made use of, and it may well be suspected, that an *Arian* then, as a *Socinian* now, in his translation would be over-favourable to his own opinions, by leaving out and putting in what might make for them, and accor-

dingly interpreting what was retained to their best advantage: ^(a) St. Hierome in his preface to the *Canonical Epistles*, vindicates the antient reading, and laies open the baseness and perfidiousness of these men. I shall here put down the whole Preface; *Non ita ordo est apud Græcos, qui integrè sapiunt, & fidem rectam sectantur Epistolarum septem, quæ Canonica nuncupantur, sicut in Latinis codicibus invenitur: Quod quia Petrus primus est in numero Apostolorum, primæ sunt etiam ejus Epistolæ, in ordine cæterarum; sed sicut Evangelistas dudum ad veritatis lineam correximus, ita has proprio ordini Deo juvante reddidimus. Est enim prima earum una Jacobi, duæ Petri, & tres Johannis, & Judæ una. Quæ si sicut ab eis digestæ sunt, ita quoq; ab Interpretibus fidelitèr in Latinum verterentur eloquium, nec ambiguitatem legentibus facerent, nec sermonum sese varietas impugnet, illo precipuè loco, ubi de unitate Trinitatis in primâ Johannis Epistolâ positum legimus, in quâ etiam ab infidelibus translatoribus, multum erratum esse à fidei veritate comperimus; tria tantummodo vocabula, hoc est, aquæ, sanguinis, & spiritus in ipsâ suâ editione ponentibus, & Patris verbiq; ac spiritûs testimonium omittentibus, in quo maxime & fides Catholica roboratur, & patris ac filii ac spiritûs sancti una divinitatis substantia comprobatur. In cæteris vero Epistolis, quantum*

(a) This Preface is printed in an old edition of the *N. T.* with the interlineary Gloss, and I find it in several MSS both in the Bodleian and our own College Library before the *Catholic Epistles*. The Style is exactly St. Hierom's and questionless his, and acknowledged as such, both by *Erasmus* and *Socinus*, however omitted by *Erasmus* in his edition of St. Hierom's works at *B. s. fil.*

à nostra aliorum differt editio ; *Leſtoris prudentia dere-
linquo. Sed tu Virgo Chriſti, Eufloebium, dum à me im-
penſius Scripturæ veritatem inquiris, meam quodammo-
do ſenectutem invidorum dentibus corradendam exponis,
qui me falſarium corruptoremq; ſacrarum Scripturarum
pronunciant. Sed ego in tali opere nec æmulorum meo-
rum invidentiam pertimeſco, nec ſanctæ Scripturæ veri-
tatem poſcentibus denegabo. Erasmus and Socinus are
ſo urged with this teſtimony of St. Hierome, that they
are forced to make uſe of very pitiful and diſ-in-
genuous arguments to invalidate it. Socinus had ſaid
before — *fortaſſe ante Hieronymum vix ullus inveni-
etur, qui teſtimonium iſtud hoc in loco plane agnoverit,*
the falſity of which conjecture, however ſo warily
laid down, has been diſproved; hereby craftily con-
cealing the citation out of St. Cyprian, he very bold-
ly accuses St. Hierome of Forgery, who having got
a Copy or Copies, in which this verſe was added,
*adverſus fidem aliorum omnium exemplarium, tam La-
tinorum, quam Græcorum, lectionem particule iſtius tan-
quam germanam defendere & promovere cœpit, conque-
rens publicè eam culpâ & fraude hereticorum abraſam
à vulgatis codicibus fuiſſe.* But St Hierome has ſuffi-
ciently confuted the falſeneſs and boldneſs of this
Cavil. He was uſed to this kind of language, as if
he*

he had corrupted the Scriptures, but he was no way moved by it; though this accusation of those of his own time perchance may not so much be referr'd to this place, as to his translation in general, and may proceed not so much from heretical malice and pravity, as envy of several of his contemporaries, who were orthodox in the faith, but were no friends to his new translation. He charges the omission upon these *unfaithful Translators* (questionless *Sabellians* and *Arians*) and upbraids them with it as a thing manifest and notorious, and easily demonstrable; and certainly he would not have made himself so obnoxious, unless he had grounded his confidence upon the authority of several *Greek Copies*: with what little pretence of reason therefore *Erasmus* and *Socinus* fancy *St. Hierome* to have changed the publick and common reading, let any indifferent person judge. But supposing that the Copies of those times varied, which *Erasmus* grants (and therefore *St. Hierome* is most falsely and unjustly accused by *Socinus* to have been the author of this interpolation) He enquires, *quoniam argumento docet utrum sit rectius, utrumve scriptum sit ab Apostolo, præsertim cum quod reprehendit, tum haberet publicus usus Ecclesiæ?* To this it may be answered, 1. that some

vicia-

vitiated and defective Copies, ought not to prejudice the authority of entire and better Copies, whether *Latin* or *Greek*. 2. that *St. Hierome* had reason to prefer and vindicate that reading, which gives such an evident proof of this great Article of the *Christian Religion*, agreeable to the doctrine of the *Catholic Church*, derived down to them by an *universal Tradition*, and acknowledged as such, by all, excepting a few, whom either discontent, or pride and conceitedness of their own parts, and a love of innovation and of being the author of a Sect, had drawn into the contrary heretical opinion. Besides, his words are so clear, that one might justly wonder, that *Erasmus* should pretend any difficulty or perplex sense in them, as he does in his, *non satis video, quid sibi velit hoc loco Hieronymus*; but that we have too just cause to suspect, how that great *Scholar* was biast and perverted in his judgment, concerning those great mysteries of Faith; though he is so wary and cunning, as not to discover himself too openly. He indeed is forced to confess the nature of the *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost* to be simple and undivided, and the essence the same, though he is peremptory, that it cannot be proved from this Text, *constat hic agi de fide testimonii, non de substantia personarum,*

(a) de illa
(scilicet) ut mihi
quidem videtur
non agitur hoc
in loco: quod de
gl. ista ista in-
terlinearis,
quam vocant,
agnosci.

sonarum, herein followed by ^(c) *Beza*, and with a great deal of ceremony confesses it to be pious to submit our understanding to the judgment of the *Church*, as soon as she shall declare herself (as certainly she has done in this in her publick Creeds, to the great shame and conviction of Hereticks, who reject her authority) yet still for all this demureness, he pleads for a liberty of interpreting *Scripture*, as if the truth were not yet wholly reveal'd, and the *Church* might err in her declarations, *nec interim nefas est citra contentionem scrutari verum, ut Deus aliis alia patefecit* (which is also the pretence of *Socinus* and his followers :) and accordingly he interprets several places of *Scripture* in favour of *Arius* and the other *Hereticks*, and particularly this, *cum totus locus sit obscurus, non potest admodum valere ad revincendos Hereticos* (the same pretence being made use of for all places, though never so plain) and endeavours to elude the force of that famous place in *1 Tim. 3. 16.* by expunging the word Θεός, as much as in him lies, that is, by pretending it was added by the *Arian Hereticks*. So that we need the less value the censure he passes upon *S. Hierome* in this matter, where nothing but pure zeal for the truths of *God* could make him so concern'd and fervent—*Ille sæpe nu-*

mero

mero violentus est parumq; pudens, sæpe varius, parumq; sibi constans.

Idacius Clarus a Spanish Bishop, who died about the year 388, at what time the elder *Theodosius* and *Valentinian* were Emperours, cites both verses, though as to their order transposed, and with a little alteration, in his book against *Varimadus* an Arian Deacon, responsione 3. — *Item ipse* (i.e. *Johannes Evangelista*, whose Gospel he had just before cited) *ad Parthos, tres sunt, inquit, qui testimonium perhibent in terrâ, Aqua, Sanguis, & Caro, & tres in nobis sunt: & tres sunt, qui testimonium perhibent in cælo, Pater, Verbum & Spiritus, & hi tres unum sunt*; which very citation is made use of, as being borrowed hence, by the author of the collections of the decretal Epistles, which beyond all doubt are proved to be counterfeit^(a) and supposititious, in the 1 Epistle of *Hyginus*, and by this is to be corrected, *Item ipse ad Parthos, tres sunt, qui testimonium perhibent in terram, Aqua, Sanguis & Caro; & tres in nobis sunt, qui testimonium perhibent in cælo, Pater, Verbum, & Spiritus, & hi tres unum sunt*. There is like variety of reading in both verses in several old Copies, some leaving out ἐν τῷ & εἰς αὐτῷ and Ὁν τῆς γῆς or ἐν ἡ γῆ, others retaining them: For this [*in terrâ*] *Socinus* confesses to be

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found

Tom. 4. Bibliothecæ veterum Patrum. Paris. 1610. pag. 372.

(a) Consule Epistolæ Pontificalium censuram à D. Blondello editam Genève. A. Chr. 1628. pag. 190.

found in *quibusdam emendatis exemplaribus*, though that we may gain nothing by this confession, he tells us immediately after, it is not extant in *emendationibus*. It might easily be foreseen, that if either had been left, and particularly this latter; the one would have infer'd the other justly and necessarily, and therefore it cannot seem strange, if the first corrupters of this Scripture, to make all sure, and to render their false and perfidious dealing the more unsuspected, omitted both; so too in that antient *MS.* *Grotius* made use of, though he gives us no proof of its antiquity in that place, and suppose it were written a thousand years since, we are not to be swayed by it, as if it were authentick, *ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες τὸ Πνεῦμα, καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ καὶ τὸ αἷμα*, and no more, who thereupon conjectures these words *καὶ οἱ τρεῖς ἐν εἰσι*, with the former verse to have been added by the *Arians* to prove the *father, son* and *holy ghost*, to be one in consent only, but afterwards removed and altered by the *Catholicks*, and added to the former verse, which is said without any the least proof either from reason or antiquity, and has nothing to maintain the fancy, but the great name of the Author of it.

That which * *Sandius* and several others allege
in

* In appendice
Interpretatio-
num Pseudo-
norum p. 381.

Grotius.
Grotius quia in
a pp 3 are one
tomb 3 rank quia
it is the case of
the way added by
any to show
father in a hope
were only one
consent but is opinion
with no other reason
or antiquity to maintain
it.

in the first place, that *eo omisso meliorem esse verborum connexionem*, the connexion is far better, if the 7 v. were omitted, and that therefore it ought to be so, and was antiently omitted; if the supposition were true, is not only vain and frivolous, but very bold and immodest to ty the spirit of God to such a way of writing, as pleases their humours and fancies best, and favours most of humane artifice, and by the same argument they may reject not only verses, but whole chapters in the N.T. for the meanness and inaccuracy of the stile, and the seeming carelessness of the method, which is not always conformable to the rules of the Gr. eloquence.

2. *Indignum est summo Deo esse testem, imo coram quo judice testis foret?* is a groundless and bold cavil; for this witnessing is nothing else but the declaration of God to mankind by evident signs and tokens concerning our Saviours being the true Messias, and of his being born in the flesh, and that he came from him. This God has attested and sufficiently made known to the World, and in this sense the Word often occurs in the Scriptures, without the least indignity offered to the Divine Nature. The only pretence he has for his fancy is a base and unworthy comparison he conceives in his mind between Gods

being a witness, and mans being a witness in our Courts of Judicature, forgetting the genuine and easie sense of the word, as I have above expressed

it. 3. That it is highly probable that this verse was inserted by a Sabellian, the contrary whereof is most true. 4. That in several MSS. and Editions of modern languages, there is a transposition of these two verses. The same before was acknowledged to be found in some Greek copies, which no way proves the pretended interpolation, but only that antient copies do not all agree. 5. That this v. does very highly favour the Arians, but this is such a strain of fancy, that he may as well allege the first words of the Book of Genesis, to prove Aristotles opinion of the eternity of the World. If men out of a pre-judicate opinion, against the doctrine of the *Catholick Church*, allow themselves to interpret Scripture according to their own fancies, it cannot seem strange to any, that they should go about to prove and justifie their blasphemies from the plainest texts of *Scripture*, that in the judgment of all sober persons, who are free from those prejudices, do most evidently refute them.

F I N I S.

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